

the field to enforce these immigration laws, telling those officers, the victims of crimes like those witnessed in south Florida over the last year, and the 80,000 criminal aliens this government cannot find, one simple thing: we are simply not serious about this crisis. This Congress is not serious about this crisis.

Earlier this summer, along with the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BOYD) and the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HART) and the gentleman from Georgia (Mr. DEAL), I introduced a bipartisan bill that would get serious about our Nation's growing criminal alien crisis. The bill, entitled the CLEAR Act, is a measure that would make clear that our Nation's 600,000 local and State law enforcement officers have the authority to enforce our Nation's immigration laws, and we would give them the training, access to data, and the resources that they need to get the job done. Finally, it would give some much-needed help to the 2,000 out-manned Federal agents we have enforcing immigration law today.

Mr. Speaker, today's broken and failed immigration system is simply unworkable and for this government and this Congress to stay on the sidelines and let 80,000 criminal aliens create more horror stories like those perpetuated by Mr. Rapalo is simply unacceptable behavior. I urge my colleague to get off the sidelines and support the CLEAR Act, get involved in this game, and let us get serious about America's criminal alien crisis.

#### THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION'S ECONOMIC POLICIES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Madam Speaker, last February the President's Council of Economic Advisors forecast that, as a result of the economic policies of the Bush Administration, there would be 510,000 new jobs generated this year. Here we are on the advent of October; and in order for that prediction of last February to succeed, 947,000 jobs would have to be created between now and December 31, in other words, within the next 14 weeks. I wish the President's Council of Economic Advisors luck because this administration, aided and abetted by this Congress, has lost 437,000 jobs so far this year. We have had record job losses under this administration and that includes the 93,000 jobs that were lost in August alone. We do not yet have the figures of course for September, but it is likely that we will be seeing some similar amount of job loss.

This administration and this Congress have given us the worst economic performance in more than 70 years; 2.7 seven million jobs have been lost since the neoconservative Republicans have controlled both the White House and

the Congress. They have also done other things which are huge in their consequences. They have given us the largest budget deficit in history, and they have also provided the Nation with a record national debt.

Just recently we learned from the Census Bureau that America is now poorer than it was last year, just as it was poorer last year than it was the year before. Median income of the average American family has dropped by more than \$1,000 within the last year. America and its families are poorer today than they were this time last year. Poverty is up.

These are the statistics, bare statistics. They only begin to tell the difficult story that has fallen on American families all across this country. We need a reversal in these policies, and we need it quickly.

#### WASHINGTON WASTE WATCHERS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. MARIO DIAZ-BALART of Florida. Madam Speaker, the Washington Waste Watchers have been hard at work locating a vast range of government waste, fraud, and abuse. Unfortunately, these examples have not been hard to find, Madam Speaker. For some, however, examples of wasted taxpayers' money does not slow down their efforts to raise taxes. We have got a spending problem here in Washington; and waste, fraud, and abuse is a huge part of why we have that problem. For example, \$366 million, \$366 million in Pell grant awards was improperly disbursed because applicants understated their income on their applications last year. That resulted in over 84,000 Pell grants lost to waste, fraud, and abuse. And the Democrats want to raise taxes to pay for more of this?

The Veterans Affairs Inspector General, Madam Speaker, estimates that roughly 14,000 incarcerated veterans have been paid about \$100 million nationwide because the Department has no method of identifying prisoners, never has, \$100 million in wasted benefits that missed going to the needy, truly needy veterans in order to line the pockets of Washington's bureaucracy. And the Democrats, Madam Speaker, want to raise taxes to pay for more of this?

Over the last 4 years, the Department of Agriculture spent a total of \$5.13 billion in food stamp overpayments. That is \$5.13 billion wasted instead of helping low-income families who are unable to put food on their table. And again Democrats insist on wanting to raise the taxes of the hard-working American people to do more of this?

We do not need to raise taxes to improve government benefit programs; but Madam Speaker, we have to be willing to reach into the pockets of the bureaucracy and stop that system from

spending the checks of our taxpayers' money.

Accounting schemes that send people to jail in the private sector do not even impact a normal promotion schedule for the bureaucracy in the Federal Government. It is not an issue here. See, it is time to hold those people responsible for wasting taxpayers' money; but we have got to be committed to fixing the broken systems, not just pouring more and more tax money from the hard-working people to keep the same programs going exactly the same and wasting the same amount of money as the Democrats would suggest.

The American taxpayers are not fooled, Madam Speaker. They know that their hard-earned tax dollars have paid for \$106 billion in Medicare improper payments since 1996. Their dollars have paid for \$233 million in improper payments within the Veterans Compensation and Benefit program. Their tax dollars have even bought a pet dog for a member of the bureaucracy with a government charge card. Billions of dollars are lost every single year to waste, fraud, and abuse. Taxpayers are sending their money here to Washington only to find that it is being wasted; and the Democrats again still want to raise their taxes, saying there is not enough money up here.

There is a clear path, Madam Speaker, to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse throughout this Federal Government. We must find savings and not tolerate, I repeat, not tolerate, any level of wasted taxpayer dollars. Democrats have chosen to oppose those efforts time and time again and fight to raise taxes in order to pay for more of this business as usual.

Every week, Madam Speaker, the Washington Waste Watchers will keep reminding every person, every person in this Chamber of the impact of government waste, fraud, and abuse, not only to the taxpayers, Madam Speaker, but also to the beneficiaries who do not receive the benefits that they do deserve. Again, we will also remind our friends on the other side of the aisle that their constant attempts to raise taxes will only result in billions of additional dollars being lost to waste, fraud, and abuse at the expense of the hard-working American taxpayer.

#### ORDER OF BUSINESS

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to take my Special Order at this time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Texas?

There was no objection.

#### LACK OF A GOOD HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.